

Rusk Refuses To Testify In Public

By Chalmers M. Roberts
Washington Post Staff Writer

Secretary of State Dean Rusk has flatly and finally refused to testify in public on the Vietnam war before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

This was revealed yesterday by Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.), a committee member and war critic. He released a Rusk letter dated last Friday before the Secretary left for the current NATO meeting in Brussels.

Gore said he felt Rusk was acting on "orders of President Johnson" and he called the Secretary's refusal to testify a "breakdown in public communication" between the Committee and the Secretary. It has been nearly two years since Rusk appeared in public before the group.

Rusk said he was prepared to testify fully behind closed doors and to have made public those questions and answers that would not endanger "our men in Vietnam, our security interests, or our diplomatic efforts to end this conflict—recognizing that our foes, as well as our friends, will carefully examine the record" of such a hearing.

The secretary argued that "any thorough hearing on our involvement in Vietnam would necessarily deal with questions of military operations and war planning, as well as the most delicate relations with other governments. The Committee is entitled to know my views on those questions. But because of the ex-

treme sensitivity of these matters, I am convinced that they should be fully discussed only in executive sessions . . ."

Rusk declared that "it has been the consistent policy of all previous Administrations to discuss matters of this kind in executive session, while an armed conflict is in progress. The single exception to this policy, which occurred early last year, does not in any way suggest that the consistent practice of the past should be abandoned."

In his statement, which he later read on the Senate floor, Gore noted that Rusk had been asked by Chairman J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) to testify on U.S. policies in Southeast Asia rather than Vietnam itself. Gore also said that Gen. William C. Westmoreland, the American commander in Vietnam, had discussed military strategy and answered newsmen's questions at a recent National Press Club luncheon.

Gore said the Senate and the public have a "right to know" "whether Administration policies are to take steps which further risk war with China, whether the Administration is willing to accept a status of neutrality of Vietnam, whether this Nation is to destroy itself internally and further to erode its position in world leadership in pursuit of policies upon which the members of the President's Cabinet have been unwilling to testify publicly for nearly two years."

Rusk is known to feel that at the last public hearing he was badgered by several Committee members.

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